

Section IV

Conservation Practice Standards and Specifications

Introduction

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical assistance to decision-makers to develop conservation plans that protect, maintain, and improve soil, water, air, plant, animal resources and related human considerations. A primary goal is to help each client attain a Resource Management System (RMS).

Section IV of the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) contains information about conservation practices applicable in Hawaii. The information contained in Section IV will help planners guide agricultural producers (clients) through the following phases of the NRCS 9-Step Planning Process:

- Step #3 – Inventory Resources
- Step #5 – Formulate Alternatives
- Step #6 – Evaluate Alternatives
- Step #8 – Implement the Plan
- Step #9 – Evaluate the Plan

Conservation practices are structural measures, vegetative measures, or management activities used to protect, enhance, or manage natural resources (soil, water, air, plant, and animal).

Conservation Practice Standards establish the minimum level of acceptable quality for planning, designing, installing, operating, and maintaining conservation practices.

The National Handbook of Conservation Standards includes NRCS national standards for about 175 practices used throughout the nation. Each state and field office has the option of revising and using national standards that meet their unique needs.

The Hawaii FOTG Section IV includes approximately 80 standards approved for use in Hawaii. These are national standards that have been revised to meet local conditions. In situations where a Hawaii standard is not included in Section IV, the planner should work with the appropriate NRCS Hawaii specialist to develop a site-specific specification or prescription for its use based on the national practice standard.

In association with practice standards are **Conservation Practice Specifications**. These specifications establish the technical details, workmanship, and quality and extent of materials required to install a practice in accordance with the practice standard. Specifications are developed by each state to meet their unique needs. Some of the practices included in Section IV do not have specifications developed for them.

In order to meet the requirements of the practice standards and specifications, **site-specific specifications** are prepared and given to the client. These are prescriptions for installing, operating, and maintaining a practice on a specific field or treatment unit. Site-specific specifications may be documented in jobsheets, construction plans, operation and maintenance guides, and/or other appropriate documents.

Jobsheets document the site-specific specifications for non-structural practices. Section IV includes Hawaii and national jobsheets for some conservation practices. If a jobsheet is included in Section IV, it should be used to document the site-specific specifications. If a jobsheet is not included in Section IV, the site-specific specifications for the practice should be documented via worksheets, maps, drawings, narrative statements in the conservation plan and/or other appropriate means.

Site-specific specifications for the installation of structural practices are normally documented via construction plans that include engineering drawings and designs. Some structural practices have **Operation and Maintenance Guides** that document the site-specific operation and maintenance requirements for a practice. If a practice does not have an Operation and Maintenance Guide, then the site-specific requirements must be documented via other appropriate means.

For assistance in planning and implementing a particular practice, please contact the appropriate NRCS Hawaii specialist.

The contents of Section IV were developed based on policy and guidelines in the following documents:

- **General Manual Title 450 – Technology, Part 401 – Technical Guides, Subpart A - Policy and Responsibility**. Available online at: http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/GM_450_401.htm
- **General Manual Title 450 – Technology, Part 401 – Technical Guides, Subpart B - Conservation Practice Standards**. Available online at: http://policy.nrcs.usda.gov/scripts/lpsiis.dll/GM/gm_450_401_b.htm
- **National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP), Chapter 1 – General Practice Standards Information**. (Released via NHCP Notice 126, December 5, 2001.) Available online at: http://www.ftw.nrcs.usda.gov/practice_stds.html